

Youth Opportunity Boston's Transitional Employment Services

In the proposal submitted to the Department of Labor for funding under the Youth Opportunity Grant initiative, we proposed to connect youth to the labor market through job brokering and coaching. Additionally, we proposed that we would also provide some subsidized or “sponsored” employment opportunities for youth who were not ready for private sector jobs, an initiative that has been piloted successfully in the summers only under the Kulick demonstration grant, Youth Opportunity Area program. This initiative was called the “Winter Jobs Program,” aptly named so that we might extend the positive experience of sponsored jobs in the summer into the cold months of winter.

A planning committee was formed to design and implement this programming and through that committee, it was discovered that even with sponsored employment, we might still not be able to reach the most difficult to serve youth. From that planning committee has grown the concept of a Transitional Employment Services, a four-tiered, developmental approach to work readiness, skill acquisition and resume building.

The first tier, **the Community Service Learning/ Work Readiness level** is geared to those who have little or no work history and have a need to develop the most fundamental employability skills such as punctuality, attendance, teamwork and positive attitude. Youth will be engaged in job readiness workshops, lifeskills classes and basic computer training. They will perform community service projects. The goal at this level is to get youth to feel connected to their community, to get invested in their own growth and development and to gain some skills that they will be able to use as a building block for their future career potential. (These activities will be approximately one month in duration. Youth will receive a stipend weekly and earn points which are used to determine which level the young person is ready for next.)

In the second tier, **the Job Level**, youth will be engaged in subsidized employment, job readiness classes and basic computer training. The activities at this level are designed to encourage the development of workplace etiquette and job retention skills in youth. Youth will be challenged to meet employer expectations. Community-based organizations will hire (and be subsidized to employ) youth for an eight week cycle. The CBO will be required to monitor the individual job performance of each youth, particularly through the use of the Work-Based Learning Plan, as well as provide guidance and mentoring. In order for youth to move on to the private sector (the third

and fourth tiers), they will need to have a completed Employment Portfolio which includes a resume, sample cover and thank you letters and references.

Youth who have successfully completed the first two levels in the *Transitional Employment Services* (or through the Intake and Assessment Team have been deemed ready for private sector employment) will then transition into the **Employment Level**. This level is geared toward youth that have some positive employment history in that they have maintained at least one job for a minimum of 3 months and they exhibit positive work behaviors. Youth work closely with Career Development Specialists to secure secondary labor market employment that is NOT subsidized. At this level, youth will further develop workplace etiquette and job retention skills with a focus on employer expectations. Career planning and skill development are also included at this level.

The Career Level in the *Transitional Employment Services* is geared toward youth with consistent employment history, positive work habits and some specific work skills. At this level, youth will work with Career Development Specialists to secure primary labor market employment, and like the Employment Level, is also unsubsidized. The Career Level participants will be engaged in more intensive career planning with a focus on seeking out and enrolling in educational, training and/or professional development opportunities. Some youth may choose to participate in skills training programs being developed as collaborations between private sector employers and Youth Opportunity Boston. YO Boston will provide an “earn while you learn” stipend for these program participants.

Through this four-tiered, graduated level approach to employment, we aim to empower youth to negotiate their way through the world of work by helping them to develop the basics of job readiness and retention and skill acquisition.